reduction in damage to structures and loss of lives in the event of an earthquake. Several steps have also been initiated for public awareness through multilingual posters and other methods of information dissemination, including the creation of appropriate data bases and making available digital tools and technologies such as GIS for improved planning for earthquake related disasters.

Herbs in Himachal Pradesh Forests

†736. SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether any research regarding availability of herbs in the forest and hilly areas of Himachal Pradesh has been conducted; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir, Some Central Ministries/ Departments/Institutes (Department of Biotechnology, Department of Indian System of Medicine and Homoeopathy, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Ministry of Environment and Forests and Universities) are implementing several research and development projects regarding availability of herbs in the forest and hilly areas of different States in the country including Himachal Pradesh.

The Department of Biotechnology has set up three national gene banks at the Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP), Lucknow, National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR), New Delhi and Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (TBGRI), Thiruvananthapuram for the collection, conservation and characterization of our precious wealth of medicinal and aromatic herbs which are rare/threatened/endangered or are

† Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

being used in traditional systems, or those which are commercially exploited. A fourth gene bank has been recently established at Regional Research Laboratory (RRL), Jammu to cover North-Western Himalayan regions including the State of Himachal Pradesh. Thousands of accessions of important medicinal and aromatic plant species are being maintained in field of gene banks, seed banks, in vitro banks, DNA bank and in cryobank of these gene banks. The Department of Biotechnology has recently sanctioned two projects on: (a) Domestication, of endangered medicinal plant species of Himachal Pradesh at Y.S. Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry, Solan and (b) Development of data base on plant resources in the State of Himachal Pradesh at the Institute of Himalayan Bioresources Technology, Palampur under the auspices of the National Bioresource Development Board. A Centrally Sponsored scheme of Non-Timber Forest Produce including medicinal plants is being implemented by National Afforestration and Eco-Development Board (NAEB) throughout the country including Himachal Pradesh. The scheme is confined mainly to degraded forest areas. During 2000-2001, a project has been sanctioned for regeneration of perennail herbs and shrubs of medicinal value in Himachal Pradesh with a physical target of 100 ha. for the Ninth Plan.

Research in Human Embryonic Stem Cells

737. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of Indian laboratories/institutions in the forefront of research in human embryonic stem cells and the present status of the specific research projects undertaken by them;

(b) the guidelines and regulations laid down for such research in the country and safeguards provided to prevent possible commercialisation of human embryo;

(c) the proposals cleared, if any, for Government funding of such projects; and